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Graeco-Buddhist Terra Cotta Head

THE Oriental Department has just received a most significant addition through the generosity of Mr. Charles H. Ludington, a Trustee and a member of the Museum Committee.

It is a little terra cotta head, only four and a half inches high, yet possessed of such peculiar charm that it at once ranks above many more ponderous and obvious sculptures in the Museum. We already own a single example of the art of the ancient kingdom of Gandhara in the shape of an heroic head of a Bodhisattva¹ in black stone. That single example is so splendid in its perfection and so far above the average production of the mixed Graeco-Buddhist influence that we had not expected ever again to venture into this field. An art museum, once it has a supreme example of a period, may rest content without multiplying inferior and diverse specimens.

But this tiny terra cotta, at once so rare and so different and appealing, not only fills a gap that we hardly dared hope to fill—but adds an object of high aesthetic importance to the collections.

So much has already been written in this Bulletin and elsewhere on the subject of the Graeco-Buddhist art of the North West Provinces of India, the ancient Kingdom called Gandhara, that it is unnecessary to repeat the interesting archaeological story of Alexander's raid in B. C. 325 and of the satrapies which were set up by him, so soon to be overthrown. The result was a half-breed art, and Greek colonial craftsmen worked on Buddhist subjects in a recognizably Classical manner, spreading it north and west to the confines of China itself. It is, however, worth while to emphasize again how restricted this influence really was in the Indian peninsula despite the important fact that the figure of the Buddha and the robe that he wears were introduced at that time and persist to the present wherever Buddhist images are made.

As for actual examples of terra cotta sculpture of the kind which we have before us, some few are in the British Museum, unpublished, some have been brought back from the Turkestan trade route by Sir Aurel Stein² and others are in the local museum near the ancient city of Taxila (modern Saraikala) and have been published by Sir John Marshall.³ In this country are three similar examples, one of which is quite as fine as ours, representing the head of the Buddha himself. Aesthetically perhaps the most important of all is still another small head made of stucco, a recent gift to the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. This last is believed to have come from the Kurram Valley in Afghanistan. Though of another material and somewhat different in character and probably the

¹ Published and illustrated in Pennsylvania Museum Bulletin No. 69.

² *Serindia*, Aurel Stein. Ruins of Desert Cathay, M. Aurel Stein.

³ Excavations at *Taxila*, Archaeological Survey of India, 1916.

work of a different group of artists, it should be considered in connection with our terra cotta.

The Archaeological Survey of India, in excavating the Dharmarajika pagoda on the site of the ancient Taxila found architectural ornaments which consisted, among other details, of small terra cotta and stucco figures of Bodhisattva and Buddhas. Several heads of these figures are illustrated in the report (Annual Report 1912-13) and bear a distinct relationship to our own.

The head presented recently to the Pennsylvania Museum by Mr. Ludington represents a Bodhisattva, probably Gautama himself before his enlightenment. On the circlet which binds the wavy hair are three flower ornaments, possibly meant to represent jeweled studs, and the scar from which a fourth has been broken. Large jeweled pendants are in the ears. The material is rather coarse sandy pottery baked at a low temperature and subsequently colored. Traces of red are left on the lips and eyes and nostrils. The surface is composed of finer smoother clay than the interior, as is plainly shown at the back of the head which is broken away. But I venture to suggest, in contradiction to certain potters who have examined the piece, that this fact is not to be explained by the application of a finer slip but by the tendency of sand and grit to retreat from a wet surface which is being worked by a tool or a finger.

It is evident that the sculptor used both his finger and a tool, for the marks of both can be clearly made out on the cheeks and eyes and hair. That the trace of color is original I have no doubt, for it is improbable that it was subjected to frequent restorations as has been the case of larger monuments standing today, and still less likely that it has been tampered with since its recovery from the earth.

The almond eyes with sharply indented lids, the carefully cut mouth and rounded chin are entirely typical of the best period of Graeco-Buddhist art which, according to Foucher, is the earliest. But if there are traces of our own Classical tradition, they are worn with a difference. The curving nose and noble poise of the shapely little head are in this case Indian. The shell of Alexandrian craft was indeed brought to the far away satrapy of Gandhara, but the result was a bastard art at best. Where it has distinct beauty, as in the two examples in our Museum, it is not because of the Greeks, but in spite of them. If this seems to be an unwarrantable assumption of the twentieth century critic, the proof lies in the study of those Gandharan examples that are closest in subject and manner to the Greek style with which we are so familiar. If further argument is needed, the art of the Gupta period, which followed Gandharan, was already nationalized and made Indian, and not till that time did the perfection of the Indian idea develop.

If this little head is of archaeological importance, how much more significant is it to our art Museum from the aesthetic point of view! We value it none the less for its half understood hints of Alexander

the Great and its possible connection with that ancient University town of Taxila which opened its gates to the conqueror with his train of fighting men and courtiers, his poets, cup bearers, historians and ladies. And whatever it may have been—a worshipful image of the Bodhisattva or an unconsidered bit of architectural ornament to enrich a holy building—it will take its place among our objects of intrinsic beauty and inestimable value to modern America. Among our rich furniture and tapestries and our paintings by old masters, it will stand delicate and remote, the work of a forgotten craftsman among alien objects, mistranslated by us perhaps, yet gradually to take its place in the assembled heritage of works of art to be better understood by another generation.

An Adoration of the Magi by Pieter Brueghel

IN THE Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels, there is an Adoration of the Magi, painted in distemper, on canvas, height 112 c. m., length 159 c. m., unsigned and undated, but listed by de Loo, in his catalog appendix to René de Bastelaer's "*Pieter Brueghel l'ancien, son œuvre et son temps*" as an unquestioned work of this master. Its *provenance* is unknown to Romdahl,¹ or to Bastelaer and de Loo, except that it was formerly in the collection of M. E. Fetis, of Brussels, until the sale of that collection in 1909, when it was purchased at public sale by the Brussels gallery.

The canvas has suffered severely from dampness, parts of the composition are either lost or faded away, especially damaged are the sky and the upper left-hand portions. Yet the picture bears sufficient traces of its original beauty to enable us to class it as one of Brueghel's finest works. Bastelaer, p. 127, calls it "one of the earliest religious compositions of the master" and de Loo, basing his judgment upon its resemblance to the style of Jerome Bosch—its stuffed accumulation of figures—its bizarre detail—its depth of tone—is inclined to date it as early as 1556-1560.

Romdahl, however, thinks it is slightly later than another Adoration—that formerly in the Roth Collection, Berlin, now in the National Gallery, London, which is signed and dated Bruegel 1563 or 1564. This Adoration also suggests clearly the influence of Jerome Bosch. Undoubtedly both the Roth and the Brussels examples were painted at about the same time.

When I saw the Brussels picture last summer I was much im-

¹ Axel L. Romdahl "Pieter Brueghel der ältere u. sein Kunst-Schaffen" *Jahrbuch der K.h. Samml. des aller höchsten Kaiserhaus. Band XXV. Heft 3*, p. 85 et seq. 1905.